

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9163

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 3260

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: PEPR, ET, US, FR, GW

SUBJ: ETHIOPIAN-WESTERN RELATIONS

REFS: A) ADDIS ABABA 3212 (NOTAL); B) ADDIS ABABA 3204(NOTAL)

SUMMARY. SEVERAL MORE STRAWS IN THE WIND MAY INDICATE THAT THE ETHIOPIANS ARE BEGINNING TO FEEL ISOLATED IN THEIR DEPENDENCE ON THE EAST AND ARE SEEKING TO BROADEN THEIR WESTERN CONTACTS WITH ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE IN MIND. THE LONG-RUN TREND MAY BE TO WESTERN ADVANTAGE, THOUGH CONTINUED PATIENCE IN THE FACE OF ETHIOPIAN PUBLIC CRITICISM WILL BE NECESSARY. NEVERTHELESS, FROM THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT STANDPOINT THE
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CONTINUED ABSENCE OF A US-SOMALI MILITARY RELATIONSHIP AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT, THE EXERCISE OF US INFLUENCE TO RESTRAIN ARAB SUPPORT FOR THE ERITREAN SECESSIONISTS PROBABLY REMAIN THE IMMEDIATE KEYS TO SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED BILATERAL US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. REF A REPORTED A RECENTLY UNPRECEDENTED DEGREE OF ETHIO-

PIAN WARMTH AND INTEREST IN COOPERATING WITH THE USG DURING THE DISCUSSION BETWEEN CHAIRMAN MENGISTU AND THE AMBASSADOR AT THE JULY 21 PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS CEREMONY. REF B REPORTED THAT LATE ON JULY 21 THE ETHIOPIAN MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE NOTIFIED USAID THAT IT HAD BEEN AUTHORIZED TO SIGN THE UPPER DIDESA DEVELOPMENT PROJECT, ETHIOPIAN SIGNATURE OF WHICH HAS BEEN DELAYED FOR MANY MONTHS OBVIOUSLY FOR POLITICAL REASONS.

2. FRENCH EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE TOLD US THAT THE PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS CEREMONY FOR THEIR NEW AMBASSADOR, JEAN AUSSEIL, WHICH TOOK PLACE JULY 21 IMMEDIATELY BEFORE OUR AMBASSADOR PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS, WAS CHARACTERIZED BY CORDIALITY, A TOTAL ABSENCE OF CRITICISM OF FRANCE'S AFRICAN POLICY (WHICH HAS BEEN AND CONTINUES A MAJOR BOGEYMAN IN THE GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED MEDIA HERE FOCUSING ON SHABA, THE PAN-AFRICAN FOREC AND THE WESTERN SAHARA) AND THAT DISCUSSIONS WERE LIMITED TO BILATERAL MATTERS (PLUS DJIBOUTI). THE FRENCH WERE GENERALLY PLEASED WITH THE TONE AND BELIEVE IT AUGURS WELL FOR THEIR AMBASSADOR'S MISSION.

3. NEWLY ARRIVED WEST GERMAN CHARGE, DIETRICH VENZLAFF, WAS CALLED IN TO SEE HAILU YEMENU, THE SENIOR MINISTER OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS ON JULY 21. THERE IS NO PRIME MINISTER IN THE PRESENT ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE. MINISTERS MANAGE THEIR MINISTRIES AND RECEIVE POLICY GUIDANCE
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FROM THE PROVISIONAL MILITARY ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL, PMAC OR DIRG, WHICH IS MADE UP EXCLUSIVELY OF MILITARY. MENGISTU IS CHAIRMAN OF THE PMAC AND OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. SENIOR MINISTER HAILU YEMENU HAS SOMETIMES BEEN USED TO TRANSMIT MESSAGES TO FOREIGN AMBASSADORS AT A SUB-PMAC, BUT HIGHER THAN FOREIGN MINISTER, LEVEL. HIS CONVOCAION OF A CHARGE IS UNPRECEDENTED TO OUR KNOWLEDGE. HAILU YEMENU THANKED VENZLAFF FOR FIVE ONGOING FRG AID PROJECTS AND EXPRESSED THE HOPE THEY WOULD NOT ONLY CONTINUE BUT BE INCREASED. HE SAID HE WANTED THE FRG TO KNOW THAT THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT REFUSE FRG AID AND THAT THE ETHIOPIANS HAD RECEIVED AN IMPRESSION THAT FRG AID WAS GRADUALLY BEING REDUCED. HE THEN MADE A FEW LAME COMMENTS ABOUT THE UNFORTUNATE EVENTS SURROUNDING THE DEPARTURE OF THE LAST FRG AMBASSADOR (DEPT WILL RECALL HE WAS DECLARED PNG AND EXPELLED ALONG WITH THE FRG MILITARY ATTACHE' IN RETALIATION FOR STATEMENTS BY FORMER FRG AID MINISTER THAT LOANS TO SOMALIA, OFFERED AS A TOKEN OF APPRECIATION FOR SOMALI COOPERATION IN RESOLVING THE LUFTHANSA HIGHJACKING, COULD BE USED FOR MILITARY PURPOSES. THE ETHIOPIANS ALSO EXPROPRIATED THE GERMAN SCHOOL IN ADDIS ABABA). VENZLAFF TOLD HAILU YEMENU THAT INDEED, RELATIONS WERE STRAINED, BUT THAT THE FRG WAS

READY TO IMPROVE THEM. IT, HOWEVER, WANTED AN APPROPRIATE ETHIOPIAN SIGNAL. HAILU YEMENU SUGGESTED THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR THEIR RESPECTIVE FOREIGN MINISTERS TO MEET, AND THE UNGA WAS SUGGESTED AS A CONVENIENT PLACE. HAILU ALSO RECOMMENDED THAT VENZLAFF HAVE A MEETING WITH ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER MAJOR DAWIT TO DISCUSS ETHIO-FRG RELATIONS. THE GERMANS DO NOT BELIEVE THE INITIATIVE FOR THIS CONVERSATION CAME EITHER FROM HAILU YEMENU OR FROM THE MOFA; THEY ARE PERSUADED IT WAS DIRECTED BY THE DIRG, PROBABLY BY MENGISTU HIMSELF.

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4. THE GERMANS ALSO TOLD US THAT IN ANOTHER UNPRECEDENTED MOVE, THEIR LATEST CONTRIBUTION TO ASSIST VICTIMS OF THE WOLLO DROUGHT AND FAMINE WAS REPORTED IN AN AMHARIC RADIO BROADCAST, THOUGH IT WAS NOT PUBLISHED IN EITHER THE ENGLISH OR AMHARIC LANGUAGE PAPERS. (NONE OF OUR CURRENT ASSISTANCE TO WOLLO HAS RECEIVED ANY PUBLICITY, HOWEVER, DESPITE PRESENCE OF CAMERAMEN AND JOURNALIST AT SIGNING CEREMONY). FINALLY, ITALIAN AMBASSADOR GUIDI TOLD DCM JULY 24 THAT PMGSE IS AGAIN MAKING INSISTENT DEMANDS FOR SOME \$2 MILLION

IN ASSISTANCE.

5. MOFA HEAD OF AMERICAS DIVISION, BERHANE DERESSE, ASKED US AT A RECEPTION JULY 24 HOW WE VIEWED THE PRESENT SITUATION. CONFIDENTIAL

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TION. WE TOLD HIM WE HAD BEEN PLEASED BY THE CORDIALITY EXPRESSED TOWARDS OUR AMBASSADOR AT THE JULY 21 CEREMONY, HAD OBSERVED ETHIOPIAN WILLINGNESS TO GET ON WITH THE UPPER DIDESA PROJECT, AND ETHIOPIAN CORDIALITY TOWARD THE FRENCH AND GERMANS AS NOTED IN PARAS 2-4 ABOVE. BERHANE TOLD US HE WAS GLAD WE HAD REGISTERED THESE EVENTS, BUT CAUTIONED US TO KEEP SPECULATION AS TO THEIR MEANING OUT OF THE COCKTAIL PARTY RUMOR MILL AND IN ALL EVENTS NOT TO MAKE ANY PUBLIC COMMENTARY. HE URGED US TO CONTINUE TO EXERCISE PATIENCE.

6. PATIENCE WILL CLEARLY BE REQUIRED REGARDLESS OF THE TRUE MEANING OF THESE STRAWS IN THE WIND. AMHARIC RADIO JULY 25 COMMENTED THAT WHEN "THE US CONGRESSMEN (TSONGAS AND BONKER) RETURNED TO THE US THEY SAID THAT ETHIOPIA SHOULD FOLLOW ITS OWN PATH AND THE US SHOULD NOT INTERFERE. PRESIDENT CARTER THEN SAID THAT THE US WOULD HELP ETHIOPIA. CONTRARY TO WHAT HE HAD SAID, HE (ALSO) SAID THAT HE WOULD ASSIST THE ERITREAN SECESSIONISTS . . . THAT SUDAN AND EGYPT, ONCE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES, HAVE NOW TURNED TO THE WEST AND SO WOULD ETHIOPIA. ALL THIS INDICATES THAT THE AMERICAN IMPERIALISTS ARE ALWAYS TRYING TO OVERTHROW OUR REVOLUTION." CRITICISM OF THE WEST BY THE MEDIA IS A FEATURE OF OUR DEALINGS WITH THE ETHIOPIANS WE SHOULD BE PREPARED TO LIVE WITH WHILE WORKING ON BETTER GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND COOPERATION.

7. IT IS CLEARLY INAPPROPRIATE TO MAKE MUCH OF THESE MINOR INDICATIONS OF INCREASED INTEREST ON THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT'S PART TOWARD THE WEST. THEIR INTEREST, IF THAT IS WHAT IT IS, IS AIMED AT ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. THE ETHIOPIANS MAY HAVE COME TO RECOGNIZE THAT THEIR COMMUNIST FRIENDS CANNOT HELP THEM IN THIS RESPECT TO THE SAME EXTENT AS THE WEST. FURTHERMORE, THEY ARE FACED WITH ENORMOUS FOREIGN EXCHANGE PAYMENTS IN HARD CURRENCIES FOR SOVIET MILITARY EQUIPMENT. CONFIDENTIAL

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AID. SOVIET AMBASSADOR RATANOV, WHO HAS JUST RETURNED AFTER A LONG ABSENCE IN MOSCOW, IS AGAIN PEDDLING LINE TO ETHIOPIANS - OR SO HE CLAIMS - THAT ETHIOPIANS SHOULD ACCEPT AID FROM WEST AS WELL AS EAST. ETHIOPIANS MAY ALSO SEE AN ADVANTAGE TO THEMSELVES TO DIVERSIFY THEIR SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE.

TANCE. IN SEVERAL RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH EVEN WESTERN-ORIENTED ETHIOPIAN OFFICIALS WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT THERE IS NO WAY THAT ETHIOPIA CAN DISPENSE WITH SOVIET AND CUBAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THEY ARE EXTREMELY SENSITIVE AND DEFENSIVE ABOUT ANY CRITICISM, PARTICULARLY WESTERN, OF THEIR MILITARY DEPENDENCE ON THE EAST, WHICH MUST BE TO SOME EXTENT EMBARRASSING TO THEM. AS PERHAPS HAS BEEN THE CASE SO OFTEN IN ETHIOPIAN HISTORY, THEY ARE BEGINNING TO FEEL ISOLATED. IF THIS BE THE CASE, WITH THE CONTINUED EXERCISE OF GREAT PATIENCE, WE MAY BE ABLE TO TURN IT TO OUR ADVANTAGE.

8. THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN CAREFUL AND FAVORABLE NOTICE OF THE USG HESITANCY TO HELP SOMALIA MILITARILY AND THE LACK OF US SUPPORT FOR THE ERITREANS. IN THESE, AS IN OTHER CASE, ETHIOPIANS OPERATE AT SEVERAL LEVELS: THE GOVERNMENT HAS PRACTICED "PRE-EMPTIVE DIPLOMACY" BY PUBLICALLY ACCUSING US OF DOING WHAT THEY FEAR WE MIGHT DO AND IS RELIEVED WHEN WE HAVE OFFICIALLY DENIED THE ALLEGATIONS; THE PUBLIC MEDIA CONTINUES ITS PLAY OF FALSE ALLEGATIONS. FROM THE PMGSE STANDPOINT, WHAT THE USG DOES VIS-A-VIS MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO SOMALIA, AND DOES OR DOES NOT DO TO TRY TO RESTRAIN ARAB SUPPORT FOR THE ERITREAN SECESSIONISTS, PROBABLY REMAIN THE IMMEDIATE KEYS TO SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED BILATERAL US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS. THIS WAS ILLUSTRATED MOST RECENTLY BY MOFA AMERICAS DIVISION DIRECTOR BERHANE DERESSE'S FAVORABLE COMMENT ON JULY 24 TO BERHANU DINKA, AFRICAN DIVISION DIRECTOR, WHO HAD JUST RETURNED FROM OAU SUMMIT IN KHARTOUM (DCM WAS PRESENT). WHILE DISCUSSING SIAD BARRE'S SPEECH IN KHARTOUM, BERHANE DERESSE POINTED OUT TO HIS (MORE INFLUENTIAL) COLLEAGUE THAT US HAS REACHED THE POINT WHERE

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IT NOW "DEPLORES SOMALI STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT FOR INSURGENT FORCES," POINT MADE BY AMBASSADOR TO HIM ON DEPT'S INSTRUCTIONS.

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